

Update #21 – “*City of Savannah*”

B-17 Restoration

July 24, 2009

The big event at the Mighty Eighth this week was the “Thank You” dinner for the “*City of Savannah*” volunteers hosted by museum CEO Henry Skipper. We have almost thirty active volunteers currently working on the “*City*” and twenty-two were able to attend the dinner.

Before dinner was served Henry spoke to the group and thanked everyone for their efforts. He told the volunteers that although there are other B-17’s in the US that are flying, on exhibit, and under restoration, but in his opinion, the “*City of Savannah*” is the most important aircraft of the group because it is being restored in the museum that is dedicated to the men who flew those aircraft in combat during World War II. Henry was followed in his remarks by Project Operations Chief Jim Grismer. Jim thanked the Team Leaders and the volunteers that work with them. He spoke of the efforts of the two Wednesday teams led by Bill Burkel and Bill Leining, the Friday (interior) Team led by Ron Gunnells, and the new Saturday (polishing) team led by JEB Harper. Next to speak was overall Project Coordinator Jerry McLaughlin. Jerry also thanked the teams and then addressed specific accomplishments by some of the museum staff and volunteers. The individuals Jerry thanked for special efforts included museum staffers Sheila Saxon, Brenda Elmgren and Bruce Johnson, as well as volunteers David Pinegar, David Talleur, Tonnie Glick and Steve Ward. Jerry also mentioned the considerable contributions that have been made to the project by volunteer Jim Argo, who was unable to attend the dinner. Next he spoke of what the future holds for our project. He told us that on August 14th Gary Norville of American Aero Services in Florida will be visiting Savannah to check out the “*City*” and advise our volunteers in conducting the corrosion inspection of the aircraft. Gary performs the annual maintenance inspections on the Collings’ Foundation B-17 “909” that flew through Savannah in 2008, so he comes to us with exceptional credentials. Jerry also mentioned that in September we will be honored to welcome three visitors from the national B-17 Co-Op organization; Harry Friedman, Doug Birkey and Tommy Garcia. These three men have been advising our project almost from its inception, and will spend several days with us looking over the “*City*” in great detail and discussing the future of the project with museum management and senior volunteer staff. It would appear that the “*City of Savannah*” is certainly appearing on the map in the national war bird restoration community.

(Continued on page 2)

Finally, as a big surprise, Henry presented Jim Grismer and Bill Burkel with signed copies of caricatures that had been drawn of them by cartoonist Jim Balleto during the American Society of Aviation Artists forum that took place at the museum several weeks ago.



The caricature on the left is Jim Grismer; and Bill Birkel is on the right - and we have no idea who the guy with the crack is...

At the end of the night it was apparent that a fine time was had by all – as you can see by the happy faces in this picture taken in front of our favorite B-17.



Front Row: Bob Brunn, Tyson Morrison, Bill Burkel, Danny Harden, Dave Talleur, 2nd Row: Ben Ridgdill, Jack Nilsen, Tonnie Glick, Mort Glick, Jerry McLaughlin, Scott Whitcher, JEB Harper, Henry Skipper, 3rd Row: David Pinegar, Jim Grismer, Bill Liening, Ken Rombouts, Joe DeNapoli, Bruce Johnson, Steve Ward

More to come...